

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Todd County  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

**Team Members:** Barb Boltjes, Chris Sargent and Vicki Bantam, Education Specialist, Ann Larson and Crystal Goeden, Program Specialists and Angie Huckins, Division of Developmental Disabilities

**Dates of On Site Visit:** November 12, 13 and 14, 2002

**Date of Report:** November 27, 2002

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Maintenance</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Procedural safeguards
- State child find form
- Screening information

- Budget information
- Interagency agreements
- Annual notifications
- Teacher assistance team manual data

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee identified staff development as a promising practice.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded that child find procedures and district policies and procedures enable the district to offer services to all children (birth through 21) within the district.

The steering committee noted that the district has policies and procedures in place to support referral procedures, all referrals are documented, there are a variety of ways for referrals to be initiated (screenings, a variety of programs), parents participate in all aspects of the referral process and staff indicated that the referral process is beneficial in helping them identify student needs.

The steering committee indicated that all procedures are in place and are implemented to work with students voluntarily enrolled in private schools. It was also noted that the district is meeting Office of Special Education requirements regarding out of district placements.

The steering committee noted that the district is proactive in attempting to prevent potential suspensions and expulsions and the district is following IDEA and Office of Special Education guidelines regarding suspension and expulsion of students.

The district provides and students receive services from competent certified staff. The district is following procedures to ensure that all special education services are provided in accordance with the child's IEP.

The district is implementing performance testing in accordance to Office of Special Education guidelines; uses data to determine if the school district is making progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators, and students are progressing according to their goals and outcomes.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee stated that more parental involvement in training is needed and training for general education is needed in the areas of assessment, modifications and planning.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practices**

Through interviews with administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers and related service staff, it became clear that professional development is a priority for the district. The district provides training and incentives for staff on site, statewide and nationwide and across the curriculum.

Following student file reviews and staff interviews, the monitoring team determined that the structure and organization of the district system for managing and tracking the special education process is well thought out, efficient and effective. This system propels a noteworthy level of communication.

The monitoring team determined through file reviews and staff interviews that technology plays a key role within the Exceptional Education Department. Staff utilizes computerized IEPs, placing student plans and progress reports on secured sites, and discriminating meeting notices, etc. from the central office to secured files at each school. Instant communication via administrative software is also utilized along with technical assistance guides and district forms which are places on the district's file server for access at all of the schools. Assistive technology plays an important role in students' learning. Staff has been trained in a number of technology programs. Both high and low-tech devices are utilized to meet student needs. Switches, adaptive toys, choice boards, as well as Intellitools, Boardmaker and IntelliPics are being utilized for students with significant delays.

For students with more independent skills, programs such as CoWriter, Write OutLoud, and Scientific Learning are available. These programs are available for use on individual student iBooks, (personal computers) at the 6-12 grade levels. Students who are at risk for learning difficulties have access to each of these programs to assist team members in trying appropriate accommodation plans prior to referral.

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified, as needs improvement.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Review
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent documents
- Behavior intervention manual
- Parental rights information
- Middle school and high school handbooks

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee determined that the district is meeting the needs of the children through pre-referral strategies, child find activities, annual reviews, services provided and child count accountability. The district has policies and procedures in place, which guarantees a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Parents and children are involved in all steps of the disciplinary process. Policies and

procedures are in place for the suspension and expulsion of students and the district continues to follow the requirement of the state to report all suspended/expelled students.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with those areas identified as meeting the requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Teacher assistance team manual
- Comprehensive plan
- Testing instruments
- File reviews
- Reevaluation sheets
- Budget information
- File reviews
- Surveys
- Open district/data base templates

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee noted the following: The district promotes on going staff development to insure the qualifications of it's staff. All levels of exceptional education staff take advantage of training opportunities. The district promotes staff development enabling staff to meet the expectations of compliance in notice and consent aspects of the eligibility and placement of children in special education. District personnel are qualified to carry out and insure that a multidisciplinary approach remains bias free and meets the minimum requirements of evaluation procedures. The district maintains staff development practices that promote the practices and technology skills of exceptional education staff to consistently give parents copies of reports. The district promotes high-level instructional skills of staff so students receive quality instruction in math and reading. Personnel are well trained and able to carry out reevaluations according to the policies and requirements established.

The steering committee stated that multidisciplinary teams and multi-faceted evaluations are a part of the reevaluation process and include appropriate reviews of the child's files and performance since the prior evaluation(s). The district meets the requirements for evaluation and reevaluation procedures as required to insure a multidisciplinary approach that is free of bias. The district practices show that implementation

is carried out so that compliance of evaluation procedures and the use of instruments in those procedures remain bias free and appropriate to the needs of the child. External evaluators are utilized when needed.

The steering committee concluded that the district consistently utilized parent/guardian input in the comprehensive aspect of the evaluation process of eligibility and program determination. Family outcomes are positive because children are determined eligible and placed in services based on comprehensive evaluations. Positive outcomes in the areas of evaluation and reevaluation results are obvious for children and their families because of appropriate implementation of policies and practices as part of the work of qualified staff. The district requires staff practices that insure that parents receive copies of paperwork associated with special education meetings including copies of evaluation results and that eligibility determination is based on established guidelines. Parents receive appropriate evaluation information and children are appropriately identified for services according to established categories.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas that meet requirements as concluded by the steering committee. Additional information regarding evaluating in the area of functional assessment is provided under areas “out of compliance”.

### **Areas out of compliance**

#### 24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.

A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child to determine eligibility and program placement. Through a review of 18 student records, the monitoring team found the district staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process or understand that this information was to be summarized and used for determining specific skill areas affected by the student’s disability, the student’s present level of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district, however, there is not an established process across all grade levels and disciplines for collecting, analyzing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25 day evaluation process for all eligible students.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights brochure

- Consent and prior notice forms
- Technical assistance guide
- File reviews
- Annual notification documentation
- Policies
- State data
- Due process notice form
- Budget information

### **Meets requirement**

The steering committee stated: The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure that special education rights are transferred from the parent to the adult students. The school district has policies and procedures in place to ensure that content of rights are delivered to parents. The district has appropriate supports in place to assist staff in identification of children who may need the appointment of a surrogate parent. The district follows the policies and procedures outlined in the comprehensive plan and parental rights brochure for consent. Procedures are in place to ensure that proper consent is secured. The districts' comprehensive plan documents procedures regarding written notice. The district has policies and procedures for FERPA and IDEA requirements. The school district has procedures to notify parents prior to destruction of records. The district has outlined procedures to be followed regarding a request for an independent educational evaluation.

The steering committee noted that staff is able to access information regarding the use and procedures for an independent educational evaluation. The staff has reference materials available to assist with issues regarding adult/student transfer of rights.

The steering committee determined that the district gives all parents their procedural rights document. The district ensures that parents have been fully informed of their rights in their native language. The district obtains parental consent for IEP implementation at each meeting. The district provides parents appropriate written notification. The district has alternative means to assist parents in understanding what is being proposed or refused. The district provides the parents with the opportunity to inspect, review, and amend all educational records when appropriate. Supports are in place to ensure confidentiality and access records. Copies of educational records are provided to parents upon request. Records are maintained in the Exceptional Education Office for five years.

Additional information about adult student/transfer of rights at age 18 is provided under areas out of compliance.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the statements of the steering committee.

### **Areas out of compliance**

24:05:30:16.01.Transfer of parental rights.

24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

The student and their parents must be informed of the transfer of parental rights one year prior to the student turning 18. In a review of 3 student records, there was no indication the student or parents were informed of the transfer of rights one year prior to the student turning age 18.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews

#### **Meet Requirement**

The steering committee reported that the district has policies and procedures in place to support the IEP team. General education staff is aware of each student's IEP. The district has policy and procedures in place to support the IEP process. The district has policies and procedures in place to support the IEP requirements. Training is utilized to better assist staff in meeting student needs. The district is reviewing IEPs annually.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The steering committee noted that the district needs to include other people/agencies in the transition process. The district needs to place more emphasis on the transition planning process in the areas of outside resources. The district needs to reevaluate its transition procedures and change them to meet the needs of the students.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets Requirement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements. Additional information pertaining to appropriate team membership, information concerning transition course of study and transition services and using functional assessment to develop present levels of performance may be found in "areas out of compliance".

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified in need of improvement. Additional information pertaining to transition may be found in "areas out of compliance".

#### **Areas out of compliance**

#### **24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program**

For each student, beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student, beginning at age sixteen, a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. The course of study for each student is a compilation of the required courses to graduate from high school, however a more detailed and more individualized approach to the course of study is required. Specific courses that are tied to each student's life planning outcomes should be discussed by

the IEP team and incorporated into the IEP document. The course of study should include all of the classes that the student is projected to take through graduation. Through interview and a review of student records the review team found transition evaluation was consistently a survey, which includes questions about the students future and was compiled by the teacher and student. This information must be used to develop a plan for students approaching transition age in order to design an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities.

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In a review of 18 student files, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation.

#### 24:05:27:01.01. IEP team.

A student's IEP team must include a representative of the school district who:

- a. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities;
- b. Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and
- c. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the school district.

In 8 out of 18 student records reviewed, an administrator or designee did not sign as a participant at the meeting.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions; consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Budget
- Interagency agreements

#### **Promising practices**

The steering committee reported that the staff to student ratio is low in order to provide students with support in the least restrictive environment.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee reported that the district has policies and procedures in place to support a continuum of LRE and that students are placed in the general education classroom for the maximum amount of instructional time appropriate. The exceptional education staff has been trained to implement behavioral intervention plans. Student placement decisions are given appropriate consideration with harmful effects being minimized, education with their peers maximized. The district has a wide range of



options for LRE including an intervention center that acts as a day placement for identified students. Behavioral planning is being implemented consistently throughout the district. The collaboration between the exceptional education preschool and other preschool/early childhood services shows outstanding practices of the district. Documentation supports justification of placement in the least restrictive environment. Students have the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities with their peers. Students are educated in the schools where he/she would typically attend if non-disabled.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practices**

Through student file reviews, staff interviews and classroom observation, the monitoring team agrees that the staff to student ratio is low in order to provide students with support in the least restrictive environment.

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of meets requirements under Least Restrictive Environment.